

the advancement of federal troops into the state would be an insult similar to that of Reconstruction and would drive another divide between northern and southern interests.¹⁴

Legal Strategies to Address Violence

In response to the troubles in the two Carolinas, U. S. Attorney General John Griggs and other Washington officials determined that an investigation was necessary. Wilmington papers reported that U. S. senator Jeter Prichard planned to propose a congressional investigation of the violence when the session reconvened in January 1899. North Carolina's Democratic press asserted that investigation by Congress would threaten a newly discovered North—South unity extolled by President McKinley and “intensify race feelings in the south and...make the negro problem still more difficult.”¹⁵ At the same time, Oliver

African American reaction to McKinley's speech was reprinted in the *Wilmington Star* after the meeting of the Afro-American Council in Washington, DC. The Council cautioned blacks that “the time has come for the colored men to act; to act with firmness, calmness and after due deliberation.” *News and Observer* (Raleigh), December 15, 1898; Timothy Thomas Fortune to Booker T. Washington, December 17, 1898 as quoted in Louis R. Harlan, ed., *The Booker T. Washington Papers*, 13 vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972-1989), 4:535; *Morning Star* (Wilmington), December 30, 1898; “Open letter to President McKinley by the colored people of Massachusetts,” October 3, 1898, Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, African American Pamphlet Collection; McDuffie, “Politics in Wilmington,” 750.

¹⁴ Hayden recounted that a “hotheaded Wilmingtonian” had telegraphed federal officials that if troops were sent into the city, “caskets should be included in their equipment” because fellow citizens “would not brook any outside interference.” Hayden, *WLI*, 98.

¹⁵ The “Negro Problem” had multiple facets. As W. E. B. DuBois observed in 1897, that although he and other contemporaries “ordinarily speak of the Negro problem as though it were one unchanged question . .

Dockery contested the election of John D. Bellamy to Congress as a representative from North Carolina's Sixth District which included Wilmington.

As a result of increased correspondence and a call to action by

. it is not one problem, but rather a plexus of social problems, some new, some old, some simple, some complex.” DuBois attributed most of the problems faced by blacks in economics, politics and education to their collective history as slaves and second class citizens after emancipation. He later claimed that the country had experienced a re-birth of the caste system for blacks similar to that which existed under slavery. DuBois summarized three arguments by which whites justified the new caste system in which blacks were second class citizens without equal rights: enfranchisement of blacks was a mistake, African Americans are inherently inferior to whites, and a final resolution to the race problem will be “open and legal recognition” of black inferiority. Intellectuals on both sides of the color line began to use the phrase – “negro problem” or “negro question” – as a catch-all for topics ranging from education and disfranchisement to strains on north-south relations. Governor Daniel Russell biographer Jeffrey Crow defined the “negro question” as a “shibboleth for disfranchisement” by whites. Owen Aldis of Chicago wrote Thomas Nelson Page that “this North Carolina affair shows that neither this generation nor the next will ever be through with the dangers arising from the negro.” He also observed that he did not believe “that the education of the intellect of the negro will alone solve the problem.” Another writer, Thomas H. Carter of Charlottesville, concluded that “the idea of the north that the [Civil] war solved the negro problem” was wrong and that the “problem” still persisted with no answer. Discussions of the “negro problem” persisted long after the Carolina riots faded from the papers. *Wilmington Messenger*, December 6, 1898; *Morning Star* (Wilmington), December 9, 1898; W.E.B. DuBois in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 1898 reprinted in *W.E.B. DuBois Speaks: Speeches and Addresses, 1890-1919*, 2 vols., ed., Philip S. Foner (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 1:104-108; W.E.B. DuBois in the *Proceedings of the National Negro Conference* in New York, 1909 as re-printed in Foner, *W.E.B. DuBois Speaks*, 196-199; Owen Aldis to Thomas Nelson Page, November 10, 1898, Thomas H. Carter to Thomas Nelson Page, Thomas Nelson Page Papers, Duke University Library, Durham; Crow, *Maverick Republican*, 138.